

Triennial 2005: There were some great award-winning performances – the Monica Lewinsky Award honoring A Woman Who Goes to Her Knees Repeatedly, to Karen “Face-Plant” (Do the) Grover on the Texas Hollow leg; the Paul Ereng 800 meter finish award to two guys on Leg 4 who came out of the Michigan Hollow bog straining for the imaginary finish line, with the winner planting a nice elbow on the loser’s ribs while drifting about 5 feet out with him (just a tad closer than the 8 second win by Tom Meyer over Nancy Kleinrock on the Danby leg I was privileged to monitor – amazing performances for both the scratch runner and the big handicapper, who, by the way, managed to buy her way into a tie with beers for the race committee by babbling something about timing problems at the start, where she lost 15 seconds on a mixup – all she had to say was that the extra point would tie her team with Joe Dabes’, and the deal was done); and the Richard Nixon “Expletive Deleted” Award for unprintable name to Skull’s team, which having TIUTALAM so that MABLIMFNIP, found that they GCITES...

But there were some performances that cannot win awards, because of the humility of Atrocious A.C., who never honor their own members: Joe Daley would certainly have been a contender for the Katherine the Great’s Horse’s Award for Outstanding Performance, winning leg 1 outright (by more than his handicap) at 55 years of age (although Big Joe’s practice of selling handicap minutes for favors and having red hair might also have landed him the Transparency International Pius Pope award); and your correspondent Spider would have been in contention for the Paul Wolfowitz Redemption Certificate, awarded to runners who follow a poor Tri with a sterling one three years on. (Paul, a native Ithacan who doesn’t dare return, ended his murderous, mendacious term as Invasion Planner and Imperial Chieftan at the Pentagon by making a lateral move to the soft side of the empire, as President of the World Bank, where he plans to expiate his sins by “changing Africa from a place of despair to a place of hope.” This best lateral career move since Robert MacNamara’s came as surprising news to the millions of Africans who didn’t know they were in despair, or if they were, had the impression that U.S. military dominance of an economic system enforced by the U.S.-controlled World Bank was a source of it...)

Here is how I moved into contention for the Wolfowitz Certificate: after a toasting in the last four miles in 2002 by that year’s Eager Virgin (2005 La Leche League awardee, Katie Stettler), I asked to return to the famed Mountain Stage out of Texas Hollow to Connecticut Hill, and even asked the Race Committee to move the race to the fall so I could finish the indoor track season, rest up, and train anew for Tri. The Committee, meeting in Truck’s bathtub as usual, approved, so there I was, standing in the dreaded hollow again, after three months of training that started in the sands of Marrakesh and journeyed through the hills of Cape Town (Elephant’s Eye), Swaziland (The Mountain with No End), Wales (The Talog Triangle) and England (Coastal Path, Seatown to Seaton) to the Ithaca 10 miler (65 minutes for Marshall Kutuzov). The Virgin had talked tough, but switched to leg 1, leaving our leg with the pneumonia-ridden Yvette DeBoer, former Katherine the Great’s Horse’s winner, as the presumptive favorite.

This disease dropped Yvette to a still strong 5th place, so after a crisp climb past her out of the Hollow and a hurried, shocked glance at Buck Naked on the way to the second hilltop, with my 14 minute handicap I was in the lead for Atrocious after a half hour, with about an hour and a half to go. Having pre-run my section a month before (the race is to the prepared!!) I did not deviate one stride as I romped down the infrequently-marked truck trail to the flats by Cayuta Lake, and reached the lake ten minutes ahead of my training time, in 55 minutes.

Atrocious crew members Mushroom, Lee Roy, and Batko met me there with potent elixirs, before leaving arsenic-laced Gatorade out for the following teams...and I rumbled along the river trail for 12 minutes to the nasty three-minute climb up the rock trail. Pain, tight hamstrings, and blown lungs were present but not yet incapacitating, and I pushed all the way up to the first road in 14 minutes. I knew I had about 30 minutes of rolling trail left, and forced as much turnover as possible...nearer and nearer to a first place finish I came, not daring to hope, just reminding myself that every painful rise was just as tough for my pursuers, and praying that they had not pre-run...but with just a few minutes to go, with no warning and no noise, a ghostly figure appeared at my side...a dreaded Action Figure Scratch runner, Randy McDermott, moving as if he was running the first lap as rabbit for Hicham El Gerouj at Oslo ...I could not have run the leg faster (although I could have run it less painfully, giving away two minutes in the first hour for more pep in the last), so I can't regret the outcome – Randy by 40 seconds...

I was pleased to have contributed a low score to Atrocious' wining total of negative 5. The Atrocious powers that be, who also meet in Truck's bathtub, have already approved my request to run in 2008 one of the two legs I have never done in my 8 Tris: the Danby Double, between Michigan Hollow and Coddington Rd. After 4 straight Tris in the west (Last Place Disaster on Ct. Hill in 1996; Partial Redemption in Texas Hollow in 1999; Mid-pack Disaster on Ct. Hill in 2002; Full Redemption there in 2005) it is time to head east....

With our youthful additions showing so well this year (Mini-me, Queen of the Nile, and Sh'Tara) I can safely predict many Atrocious victories to come...to those teams who plan to load up on multi-tri veterans to take advantage of this year's special scoring bonus for veterans, be advised that there may be a different set of rules next time...

Spider Atrocious